

Science & Society: Stories of (Agri)Culture
S&TS 1126.101, Fall 2017

Meeting time: M/W 8:40-9:55am
Location: Balch Hall/Tatkon Center, 3331

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Course Description

This seminar will teach you to write clearly about issues in agriculture, paying particular attention to the mutual shaping of science and society. For inspiration, we will critically read compelling writers from a variety of genres, such as Liberty Hyde Bailey, Rachel Carson, Evelyn Fox Keller, and Michael Pollan. We will draw extensively on Cornell-based resources and stories through visits with university archivists, historians, laboratories, and scientists. Writing assignments may include: magazine-style science articles about researchers at Cornell, as well as oral histories with agriculturalists in the Ithaca or Cornell communities. This course will culminate in the submission of a collaborative proposal for a Mann Library exhibit on stories of agriculture and society at Cornell.

Course Rationale

By using Cornell’s campus itself as a laboratory for considering stories of (agri)culture, this course will provide you with a unique appreciation of the university where you will spend the next four years of your life—and most importantly, with a solid foundation in writing, research, and community-building that can be transferred to any disciplinary path you choose to pursue. The stories, people, locations, and archives you will be exposed to will be thought of as both tools and objects of research, and will be conceptualized, discussed, and written about through a variety of (sub)disciplinary lenses. We will model our work on well-written, classic historical and contemporary texts that demonstrate the variety of writing styles and genres common in the field of Science & Technology Studies. The goal of this course is to use the writing (and revision) process to build persuasive arguments that suit the demands of a particular topic, medium, or audience.

Required Texts

A Feeling for the Organism: The Life and Work of Barbara McClintock, Evelyn Fox Keller
Botany of Desire: A Plant’s Eye View of the World, Michael Pollan
Liberty Hyde Bailey: Essential Agrarian and Environmental Writings, Ed. Zachary Michael Jack
Silent Spring, Rachel Carson

Learning Outcomes

As you proceed with this course, your work should show that you have acquired basic techniques and vocabulary for analyzing texts about agriculture, which come in a variety of media and genres. You should have a foundation for utilizing library resources and other research services at Cornell University, including an understanding of strategies for avoidance of plagiarism and other violations of Cornell's Code of Academic Integrity. In addition, you should learn to use and appreciate drafting, revising, and peer review to improve your writing. With these skills, you are expected to develop and demonstrate competency in formulating a specific, persuasive, arguable thesis; in supporting your position with appropriate evidence; and communicating your ideas in clear, grammatically correct prose.

Journal Activity

This course is primarily a course about writing. And we will write a lot! I ask that you purchase a small journal at the beginning of the semester; the Cornell Store has an overwhelming selection, so be sure to pick something you will not lose, and that you will like to write in by hand. You should plan to bring it to class every day for in-class writing exercises and free writing. I will not collect or grade your journals.

Conferences

You should each plan to have two individual conferences with me during the semester. Of course, I encourage everyone to meet with me more frequently. Please feel free to attend office hours, make appointments, or ask me questions over email.

Attendance

Seminar-style classes only work if students are physically and mentally present. In the event of an emergency, serious illness, or other event, absences will be excused *if instructor is notified in advance*; however, please come talk to me as soon as possible so we can develop a strategy to keep you from falling behind. A lot of the activities we will do in class are difficult to make up on your own time. That being said, stuff happens. Two unexcused absences are permitted over the course of the semester. Each additional absence (or chronic tardiness) will negatively impact your final participation grade.

Requirements for Written Work

- Plan to submit two copies of each writing assignment: One as an MS Word document submitted via email *prior to arriving in class*, and one as a printed, hard-copy brought with you to class.
- Typed in a standard, 12-point font
- Double-spaced
- All pages should be numbered and have 1-inch margins
- Include your name, my name, the course number (STS 1126) and date
- Proofread and spelchek you're werk!

Requirements for Reading Assignments and Student-Led Discussion

Reading (and talking about) good writing is a critical step in growing as writers. Unless otherwise stated, you are expected to come to class each Wednesday prepared to discuss that week's assigned readings. Please *bring* the readings and your notes with you. Each student will

have an opportunity to (co)lead class discussion on these weekly readings. Your effectiveness and engagement in leading the class discussion will be reflected in your participation grade. Naturally, preparation is important for fostering discussion. You will receive a separate rubric and schedule to help you in leading an effective discussion, but you should plan to focus on the following:

- Clearly understanding the text — this may sometimes take multiple readings of the text and extensive note-taking;
- Preparing a quick summary of the text, including the author’s main arguments and selection of specific passages to serve as evidence;
- Developing a number of effective, relevant, and diverse discussion questions that cover enough material for about 20 minutes of class time.

Grading Policy

- Written work, including shorter (2-3 pages) and longer (5+ pages) essays — **70%**
- Class participation, including attendance, in-class writing, peer review workshops, and thoughtful participation during class discussions — **30%**
- There will be numerous extra credit opportunities for engaged attendance with related out-of-class events

Electronics

While computers are often helpful learning tools, they can also be distracting and stifle productive discussion. Because of this, I ask that laptops, tablets, and cell phones remain stowed unless I ask you to bring them to class in advance. Sorry, but I’m a millennial, too ☺

Academic Integrity

Because words, ideas, and research represent the intellectual property with which scholars build their careers, “Using that property without permission or credit is a form of larceny” (Hjortshoj, *The Transition to College Writing* pg. 183). All of the work you submit in this course must have been written for this course exclusively. All sources or references must be properly cited, or you may risk penalty for violation of Cornell’s Code of Academic Integrity:

<http://ccengagement.cornell.edu/new-student-programs/academic-initiatives>. If you have questions, *please ask!*

Public Domain

All of the writing produced for this class will be considered eligible for public use. Your work may be read and shared with your class, future classes, the Knight Institute, and/or my colleagues for pedagogical purposes.

Students with Disabilities

I am happy to discuss appropriate academic accommodations that may be required for students with disabilities. Requests for academic accommodations are to be made during the first three weeks of the semester, except in unusual circumstances. Students are encouraged to register with Student Disability Services to verify their eligibility for appropriate accommodations.

Calendar

Week 1: Introduction

- Wednesday (Aug. 23) — Introduction

Week 2: Cornell College of Agriculture and Life Sciences

- Monday (Aug. 28) — Ag Quad tour, hosted by Corey Ryan Earle '07
- Wednesday (Aug. 30) — **Essay 1 FINAL due (2-3 pages, ungraded)**

READ: Liberty Hyde Bailey: Essential Agrarian and Environmental Writings, Preface; Introduction; essays in theme/chapter of your choice

Week 3: Liberty Hyde Bailey and the Essay

- Monday (Sept. 4) — LABOR DAY, No Class
- Wednesday (Sept. 6) — **Essay 2 draft due**; secondary sources and citations lesson with Food and Agricultural Librarian Ashley Downs *in Mann Library's Stone Classroom*.

READ: Cronon, W. (1992). A place for stories: Nature, history, and narrative. The Journal of American History, 78(4), 1347-1376.

Week 4: Liberty Hyde Bailey and the Essay

- Monday (Sept. 11) — Revisions workshop
- Wednesday (Sept. 13) — Archival lesson with Food and Agricultural Librarian Ashley Downs *in Mann Library Room 102*.

READ: A Feeling for the Organism: The Life and Work of Barbara McClintock, Ch. 1-4

Conferences September 11-15

SAT Sept. 16 — Visit to NYS Agricultural Experiment Station, Geneva, NY

Week 5: Barbara McClintock and Cornell

- Monday (Sept. 18) — **Essay 2 FINAL due**; *The Art of Quoting* in-class style exercise
- Wednesday (Sept. 20) — **Essay 2 Reflection due (2-3 pages)**; oral history lesson

READ: A Feeling for the Organism: The Life and Work of Barbara McClintock, Ch. 5-8

Week 6: Writing Culture and Ethnography (McClintock Cont'd)

- Monday (Sept. 25) — Guest: Horticulture archive researcher Dr. Karen Penders St. Clair
- Wednesday (Sept. 27) — **Essay 3 PLAN due**

READ: Samuels, H. (1986). Who controls the past. The American Archivist, 49(2), 109-124; A Feeling for the Organism: The Life and Work of Barbara McClintock, Ch. 9-12

Week 7: *Silent Spring* and Rachel Carson's Legacy

- Monday (Oct. 2) —
- Wednesday (Oct. 4) —

READ: Silent Spring, Ch. 1-7

Week 8: Rachel Carson continued

- Monday (Oct. 9) — FALL BREAK, No Class
- Wednesday (Oct. 11) — **Essay 3 DRAFT due.** Workshop: Quotes and paraphrasing

READ: Silent Spring, Ch. 8-12

Week 9: Academic Writing & Research

- Monday (Oct. 16) — Environmental activist and writer Mark Lynas to discuss science communication and pest management in a post-DDT environment
- Wednesday (Oct. 18) — **Essay 3 FINAL due.**

READ: Silent Spring, Ch. 13-17

Week 10: Botany of Desire

- Monday (Oct. 23) — Discuss “Food, Inc.”
- Wednesday (Oct. 25) — Guest: Dr. Alison Van Eenennaam, Animal Scientist, U.C. Davis

“Food Evolution” Screening Wednesday, October 25, 7pm at Cinemapolis -- \$9.00/student

READ: Botany of Desire, Introduction, Chapter 1

Week 11: Botany of Desire & Michael Pollan

- Monday (Oct. 30) — **Essay 4 writing workshop (bring draft)**
- Wednesday (Nov. 1) — Introduction to collaborative final project

READ: Botany of Desire, Chapters 2 & 3

Week 12: Science and Writing

- Monday (Nov. 6) — **Essay 4 FINAL due**
- Wednesday (Nov. 8) — Introduction to science writing

READ:

For Monday: Botany of Desire, Chapters 4 & Epilogue

For Wednesday:

1. Re-read Ch. 8 from Evelyn Fox Keller's *A Feeling for the Organism*
2. McClintock, B. (1950). "The origin and behavior of mutable loci in maize." *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 36(6), 344-355.
3. Fedoroff, Nina. *Barbara McClintock Biographical Memoirs* (highlighted excerpts)

Essay 5 proposal due Friday, Nov. 10 by 11:59pm

Final (collaborative) project/Essay 6 proposal due Monday, Nov. 13 by 11:59pm

Week 13: Science, Society, and Scientific Writing

- Monday (Nov. 13) — Guest: Science Journalist Brooke Borel (*tentative*)
- Wednesday (Nov. 15) — Guest: Dr. John Losey, Entomologist, Cornell (*tentative*)

READ for Monday: John Losey paper and responses (will send)

Week 14: Writing Workshop

- Monday (Nov. 20) — **Essays 5 & 6 workshop**
- Wednesday (Nov. 22) — THANKSGIVING BREAK, No Class

Week 15: Writing Workshop

- Monday (Nov. 27) — Collaborative exhibit presentations
- Wednesday (Nov. 29) — Conclusion activity; **Essay 5 FINAL DUE**

Essay 6 FINAL due: Thursday, Dec. 7 by 11:30am